



Mr. CLARKE's
DISCOURSE
ON THE DEATH OF
Doctor APPLETON,



1795



A
DISCOURSE,

DELIVERED AT THE
FIRST CHURCH IN BOSTON,

19TH APRIL, A. D. 1795,

THE
LORD'S-DAY AFTER THE INTERMENT
OF
NATHANIEL W. APPLETON, *M.D.*

BY
JOHN CLARKE. <



Printed by SAMUEL HALL, in Cornhill, BOSTON.
1796.





Psalm LXXXVIII. 18.

“LOVER AND FRIEND HAST THOU
PUT FAR FROM ME ; AND MINE
ACQUAINTANCE INTO DARK-
NESS.”

IT is justly observed by an inspired instructor, that “the judgments of God are unsearchable, and his ways past finding out.” And never do I feel a stronger conviction of this truth, than when I consider the dreadful sentence pronounced on the first pair ; and observe its execution on their posterity. That, after a term of years, the dust should return to the dust again, is not an unnatural expectation. But how mysterious is it, that life should be broken off in the midst ; and that piety and virtue should find an early grave ?

How

How astonishing, that the destroyer should pass over those who are wishing to be gone ; and that he should grace his triumphs with those who were endeared to society by their many services ; who were a blessing to their families, and an example to the world ? When persons of this description are arrested in the midst of their days, it is impossible not to exclaim with the prophet, “ verily, thou art a God that hidest thyself, O God of Israel.” With our faculties, we must despair of comprehending the reasons, and moral ends of such an unexpected event. But astonishment does not imply a suspicion that the ways of God are not right. Though intervening clouds hide the sun from our view, yet we are assured that it exists ; and that it shines. And we may feel as perfect a confidence in the justice of God, though darkness involve his administrations.

The person, who innocently complained in the affecting language of the text, might have derived great consolation from these reflections. How

far

far he had studied the character, and thought on the ways of God, it is impossible for us to determine. This is certain, there must have been a great depression of spirit, when this elegy was composed. The writer gives a mournful detail of his sufferings. And the description closes with these words: "Lover and friend hast thou put far from me; and mine acquaintance into darkness."

It would be to little purpose to inquire after the author of this psalm; or to examine his particular causes of complaint. Our time might be more usefully employed in considering the evils implied in the separation of Lover and Friend, and the consignment of our acquaintance to the land of darkness;—the lesson, which we may learn from such a dispensation;—and the temper with which we should meet it. Whilst I give this turn to the subject, you will favour me with your serious attention.

First—when "lover and friend are put far from us, and our acquaintance into darkness," we lose
that

that portion of our happiness which arose from their society. Some of our most agreeable moments may be referred to the virtuous connexions formed in this world. We were made for society and friendship. And when wisdom and virtue recommend those with whom we live, or with whom we are in habits of intimacy, their conversation furnishes a high entertainment. It is a happiness to be with persons who have our confidence and affection. There is a pleasure in beholding such objects. And their society affords a gratification infinitely surpassing the delights of sense. I would ask those, who have pursued happiness in every form ; and tasted it from every cup, whether any joys can be compared with those of a virtuous friendship.

Of how much true enjoyment are we then deprived, "when lover and friend are put far from us, and our acquaintance into darkness !" We no longer hear the musick of their voice, or taste the pleasures of their conversation. The
form

form, which once delighted us, can no longer charm ! And the tongue, which entertained us, is locked in everlasting silence ! All the rational gratifications which once flowed from the society of friends and acquaintance, lie buried with them in the grave ! And will any pretend, that such a loss is not to be regretted ; that such a separation from objects deservedly dear, is not to be placed among the heavier calamities of life ? Surely, in such circumstances, a christian sufferer might be permitted to exclaim, " have pity on me ; for the hand of God hath touched me."

Secondly—when deprived of our virtuous friends and acquaintance, we lose not only the pleasure, but the benefits of their society. It is possible, that great information may be derived from those with whom we are intimate. Their conversation may be a source of moral instruction. And their remarks on human actions, and human life, may be a guide to us, in respect to the errors which we are to avoid ; and the virtues

B

which

which we are to cultivate. Our knowledge of all kinds may be greatly increased by their communications. And we may find their society a mine of intellectual wealth, from which we may draw forth the true and durable riches.

Considered then, in the light of instructors, what a misfortune is it to be deprived of those, who were bound to us by the nearest and most honourable of all ties; or whom we embraced as particular friends and acquaintance? Their death has put a period, as to many rational pleasures, so to much improvement. We are no longer enlightened by their wisdom, informed by their studies, or instructed by their experience. Religion no longer addresses us by their lips: and reason ceases to persuade us with their voice. And, if it be a truth, that "he who walketh with wise men, shall be wise," one opportunity of verifying the remark is gone forever.

Thirdly—when our christian friends and acquaintance are removed by death, we lose the advantage

advantage of their good example. Nothing has such a tendency to render us virtuous and pious, as an intimacy with those who are eminent for these moral excellencies. To see religion carried into life, is the most effectual way to become religious. The instructions, which we hear, we may soon forget. Compared with actions, words make but a slight impression. But when we are daily witnesses of a pure and rational devotion, of the strictest integrity, of unfeigned humility, and the most enlarged benevolence, it is difficult to turn our eyes from the beauty of holiness; or to resist the attractions of religion. That which we see naturally affects the heart. And the actual display of religion in the temper and life, has made more converts to christianity, than the best defences which human ingenuity has produced.

Losing our friends and acquaintance, we lose then, the benefit of their good example, and with it the moral influence of their virtuous actions.

The

The earth, which covers their bodies, intercepts the light which once shone upon us. We no longer contemplate the spirit of religion in their temper, and the charms of it in their practice. One of the cords, which drew us to God and our duty, is fatally broken. We have lost a guide which it was our delight to follow; a pattern which it was our ambition to imitate. The dispensation therefore, which has deprived us of such a constant and powerful stimulus to every good work, must be considered as no common trial.

Finally—the survivors of friends, lovers, and acquaintance often sustain, in their removal, an irreparable worldly loss. The pleasures of their society, instruction, and example, are not the only good derived from these connexions. It often happens, that in the character of the friend, are united that of the husband and parent. And our acquaintance may be an useful member in society. In this case, a numerous family may be deprived of its support; and the community, of services which had been faithfully rendered. And

And will not religion justify the tear, which is shed on so mournful an occasion? Is it unbecoming the dignity of christianity to lament the ravages of death, when attended with so many dreadful consequences? May not the widow and the orphan innocently bewail their loss? And is not friendship permitted, under such a bereavement, to rend its mantle, and lie prostrate in the dust? The prospect of a re-union with those whom we love, cannot render us insensible of the loss sustained by a temporary separation. It is one thing to convince our reason; another, to overcome our passions. And it is the excellency of our religion, that it permits us to feel as men, if we are careful to sorrow as christians.

Having considered the evils implied in a separation of lover and friend, and the removal of our acquaintance into darkness,—I now proceed to the lesson which we may learn from this dispensation. And the uncertainty of all those enjoyments which arise from earthly connexions is
solemnly

solemnly proclaimed in our ears, when those whose affection and society constituted our happiness, descend to the grave. When we visit the mansions of the dead, every stone which meets our eyes, records this melancholy truth. On every monument we read, "verily, every man, at his best estate, is altogether vanity." In early life, we form connexions; and fondly presume, that they will be lasting. We look forward to many years of domestick felicity. And a succession of new and virtuous pleasures rises in prospect. But scarcely do we form these hopes, before they are disappointed. The lover and friend is unexpectedly taken from us. And our acquaintance lives not half the days, which we had allotted him. A rising family ask in vain for the parent, whose industry supported them; and whose affection made them happy. And the friend as vainly inquires for the friend. Relatives and acquaintance are confounded with the discovery, that they had erected their hopes on an unsubstantial "vapour,

pour,

pour, which appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."

Let us give heed to a lesson, so often taught by the dispensations of divine providence. At the moment when we form a connexion, let us call to mind how soon it may be dissolved. Where a pure and honourable affection unites persons in domestick life, let them remember, that, so far as their happiness depends upon days and years, they can have no security for its continuance. The parent should regard the child as an uncertain good. And in the warmest transports of friendship, we should not forget, that there may be only one step between our friend and the grave. "As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more." This is a solemn truth. And under its influence, we should beware of placing our confidence on any earthly connexion, as a permanent source of happiness.

In

In the course of his moral instructions, Solomon inquires, "doth not wisdom cry? and understanding put forth its voice?" It does; and particularly from the earth which covers our departed friends. It thence proclaims to us, that "man knoweth not his time." It reproves us for confiding in any thing so frail as human life. And it exhorts us to view friends and acquaintance as a transient blessing. When we find an object worthy of our affection, it directs us to prepare for its loss. And it continually inculcates a suspicion, not of the purity, but of the permanency of those enjoyments which we derive from the society of those whom we respect and love. Its language is, "cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils,—whose glory is as the flower of grass,"—whose days are few and uncertain,—and "whose best estate is vanity."

To these reproofs, warnings, and exhortations, let us not refuse a decent attention. Let them inspire us with the wise resolution to set our affec-
tions

tions on things above, not on things on the earth. Whilst our sky is clear, let us look for clouds. Whilst all things are tranquil around us, let us prepare for the tempest. Whatever we enjoy, let us be so far suspicious of its continuance, as to be neither confounded, nor impatient, should God resume his favours. Thus prepared for losses and disappointments, we should behave with dignity, when our friends are put far from us, and our acquaintance into darkness.

But this leads me to the *last* inquiry, namely, with what temper we should meet the dispensation, which deprives us of those who enjoyed and deserved our affection. And that we should suffer with patience, is one of the plainest dictates of religion. "Affliction cometh not from the dust : neither doth sorrow spring from the ground." There is a God above, a being of infinite wisdom, power, and goodness, who gave ; and who hath taken away. And shall we presume to find fault with his measures ; or to say to him, what doest thou ?

C

thou? It is observed to the honour of Job, that
 under all his misfortunes, "he sinned not, nor
 charged God foolishly." And speaking of him-
 self, the psalmist says, "I was dumb, I opened
 not my mouth, because thou didst it." Is it con-
 ceivable that the best of beings would afflict us,
 if it were not for wise and benevolent ends?
 Would he separate lover and friend;—would he
 remove the affectionate parent from his offspring,
 and at a time, when his protection, counsels, and
 example were most wanted;—would he take from
 society a good citizen, and from the church an
 eminent christian, unless for reasons worthy of his
 own wisdom and goodness? No surely: the God
 of heaven and earth must do right. His under-
 standing being infinite, he must comprehend the
 interests of his creatures. His power being com-
 menfurate with his knowledge, he must be as able
 to execute his designs, as to form them. And
 actuated by a disposition to communicate good,
 the end of all his measures must be the perfection
 and happiness of the human kind. Proceeding

Proceeding from such a cause, shall we then, repine at our misfortunes ? Shall we insinuate, that God hath ceased to be gracious ? Overlooking the mercies which we have enjoyed, shall we dwell, with a sullen impatience, on the miseries which we have experienced ? Shall we forget the flowers, which we have gathered in the journey of life, and remember only the thorns, which have wounded us in our progress ? No : let us be just to God ; and own the rectitude of his dispensations. Against his judgments, let us place his numberless mercies. Let it be our language, " shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil ?" And when following our nearest friends to the grave, and committing our most valued acquaintance to the dust, let not a disrespectful thought rise in our minds, or one murmur accuse us of impatience.

To some present, this may be a hard lesson : but it is a lesson which the christian must learn and practise. Difficult as it is, the effort must be made :
and

and you, to whom I now more particularly address my discourse, must endeavour to bear adversity with the temper of the gospel. In excuse for extreme sorrow, you may plead the greatness of your loss. You may urge the amiable manners, the excellent temper, the fervent devotion, the consummate prudence, the strict integrity, the enlarged benevolence, and all the christian virtues which adorned the deceased. You may observe, that an early period has been put to a life of honour and usefulness. You may intimate, that in losing a parent, a rising family are deprived of the hand which led them ; of the wisdom and experience which instructed them ; and of the bright example which charmed them to the practice of religion. And a survivor still more near may plead the many united evils involved in her loss.

To this detail of moral and christian virtues, we do not object. It is acknowledged that the person, whose death has led to these reflections, was the
man

man of pure and undefiled religion ;—was a pattern of all the excellencies which adorn the human character. His integrity, his veracity, his meekness, his benevolence, his profound reverence of the Deity, his respect for the Saviour, and his ardent love for his country, were displayed on numberless occasions ; and gathered new brightness through every successive period of life. He was, what society must ever prize, a firm patriot ;—what religion requires, a rational and obedient christian !

But “ mark the perfect man, and behold the upright ; for the end of that man is peace.” The good man has every thing to hope beyond the grave. For him are prepared crowns of glory, a heavenly inheritance, pleasures without alloy, and joys which never fail. Inasmuch as his Redeemer liveth, he shall live also. There is a voice which will reach those who are now sleeping in the dust. There is an arm which will open the gates of death, and lead captivity captive. There is a Saviour, who will change our vile bodies ;

and

and fashion them like to his glorious body. There is a Judge who will place the righteous at his own right hand; and who will say to them, "come, ye blessed of my father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, from the foundation of the world." And there is a state, in which those who now mourn, will forever rejoice; in which the friendships begun in this world will be renewed; and where piety will be immortal. These are not the airy flights of enthusiasm, but the words of truth and soberness. Wherefore, "comfort ye one another with these words."

Amen.



The following character was published in the Columbian Centinel, on the Saturday succeeding Dr. APPLETON'S death.

BOSTON, April 18, 1795.

DIED, on Wednesday evening last, in the 40th year of his age, NATHANIEL WALKER APPLETON, A. M. AAS. MMS.—If it be true, that “wisdom is grey hairs, and an unspotted life, old age,” Dr. APPLETON descended to the grave with these honours. A good understanding, and an excellent disposition, were the ornament of his youth, and gave splendour to his riper years. The former, improved by study, rendered him respectable as a physician; the latter, confirmed by religion, made him eminent as a christian. To an academical, succeeded a medical education; and his natural disposition concurring with his studies, he was equally qualified for the offices of humanity, as susceptible of the exquisite pleasure of doing good. In the various relations of husband, son, parent, brother, and friend, his conduct was most exemplary. With an uncommon gentleness of manners, he united an exalted firmness of character. And to the close of life, his moral and political virtues reflected new lustre; because he was a christian from inquiry, and a patriot from principle.

6-AP64